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## A NOTE ON CHAUCER'S ADAM

The well-known lines of Chaucer in which he calls down the plagues upon the head of Adam 'his owne scriveyn'<sup>1</sup> and Petrarch's letter to a friend lamenting the conditions of copying,<sup>2</sup> might lead one to assume that all copyists of that day were alike. There is preserved, however, a contemporary record which indicates that honesty had not yet been whipped out of the trade. In 1403 the "reputable men of the Craft of Writers of Text-letter, those commonly called 'Limners,'<sup>3</sup> and other good folks, citizens of London, who were wont to bind and to sell books," petitioned the Mayor and Aldermen that "they may elect yearly two reputable men, the one a *Lymenour*, the other a Text-Writer (*escriveyn text*<sup>4</sup>), to be Wardens of the said trades." These Wardens are "diligently to oversee, that good rule and governance is had and exercised by all folks of the same trades . . . pertaining, to the praise and good fame of the loyal good men of the said trades, and to the shame and blame of the bad and disloyal men of the same."<sup>5</sup> From time to time the Wardens may present to the Chamberlain (at the Guildhall) "the defaults of the said bad and disloyal men; . . . to the end that the same may there, according to the wise and prudent discretion of the governors of the said city, be corrected, punished, and duly redressed." Because "it concerned the common weal and profit," the petition was

<sup>1</sup> Emerson, too, laments that correctness is very rare. "I am sure no author believes that any reader of his verses will copy them accurately." *Journals*, 1856-1863 (Boston, 1913), pp. 398-399.

<sup>2</sup> Quoted by Root, *The Poetry of Chaucer* (Boston, 1906), pp. 69-70.

<sup>3</sup> Illuminators (see *Letter-Book I*, p. 25).

<sup>4</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 26. The *Lymenours* had had a mistery before this time (*Ibid. H*, pp. 389, 403). They now seem to have joined with the scriveners.

<sup>5</sup> Italics are mine. The rebellious are to be punished according to an ordinance passed in 1364 (*Letter-Book G*, p. 174) affecting all undesirables in the different trades of the city, that is fine and imprisonment.

unanimously granted.<sup>6</sup> Unfortunately, Chaucer did not live to enjoy this new lease of honesty.

Among the complaints mentioned by Petrarch one was the laziness of the copyists. From Chaucer's lines we infer that Adam's sins were quite different. Indeed they sound so modern that they might have been addressed to a professional workman of the twentieth century. Why the haste on Adam's part Chaucer does not take the pains to tell us. Possibly he didn't know, but perhaps the following interesting will of a London scrivener (made in 1371) may throw some light. At all events, it will be stimulating.

Geoffrey Patrik, "scryveyn,"<sup>7</sup> desires to be buried "in the churchyard of S. Mary's Chapel in the new churchyard near Smethefeld." He leaves bequests "to the said chapel, and to the church of S. Michael de Paternostercherche and ministers therein." To two sons he makes pecuniary bequests, also to three daughters (one of whom was an idiot),<sup>8</sup> his apprentice,<sup>9</sup> a chaplain, a friar hermit "at the place called 'le Swannesnest' near the Tower," a recluse monk near the Tower, another friar hermit and his two companions; "also to each of the four orders of friars, the three colleges of lepers near London." To his family he leaves a tenement "in the parish of St. Giles." To his wife the custody of the children as long as she remains unmarried, "also twenty pounds sterling by way of dower of his movable goods,

<sup>6</sup> Arber, *A Transcript of the Stationers' Registers* (London, 1875), Vol. I, p. xxiii. First printed by Riley in his *Memorials of London* (pp. 557 f.). A summary by Sharpe in *Letter-Book I (Calendar of Letter Books of the City of London, London, 1909)*, pp. 25 f. Cf. Wattenbach, *Das Schriftwesen im Mittelalter* (Leipzig, 1875), p. 472.

<sup>7</sup> Elsewhere he is mentioned as a "clerk of la Riole" (*Calendar of Wills, Court of Hustings*, ed. Sharpe, London, 1889-1890. 2 Parts. Part II, p. 35). He was also a clerk to Cecilia Rose, "relict of Thomas Rose, clerk." (*Ibid.*, p. 228.)

<sup>8</sup> *Letter-Book H*, pp. 430-1. A guardian appointed for her and her property "in the parish of St. Giles without Crepulgate."

<sup>9</sup> Adam?

her entire chamber, and all beds, linen and woollen clothes, vessels, etc." The "residue of his goods" is to be divided—one part to go to his wife and the other "to be devoted to pious and charitable uses."<sup>10</sup> A pretty formidable list of worldly goods in addition to having reared a family of five.<sup>11</sup> Was it accumulated through haste or were the copyists well paid?

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### BRIEF MENTION

The *Cartulario de Don Felipe III Rey de Francia*, publicado por D. Mariano Arigita y Lasca (Madrid, Sucesores de Hernando, 1913, 8vo., vii + 159 pp.)<sup>1</sup> deserves mention here on account of its two French and seven Aragonese documents, the remaining 157 being Latin. The codex is preserved in the Archivo General de Navarra (in Pamplona) and consists of royal letters of the years 1274–1279, to which the edition has added several documents of the same period. The editorial work leaves something to be desired. The editor has ignored completely the publication of Brutails (*Documents des Archives de la Chambre des Comptes de Navarre*, Paris, 1890), a comparison with which reveals variations in the title of the *Cartulario* and in the measurements of the manuscript. Furthermore, Brutails' study of the ms. is much more detailed than that of Arigita, and describes the characteristic handwriting of folios 16–23 as of the second half of the thirteenth century. Arigita notes that "los dos amanuenses eran algo impéritos en la lengua latina," but he makes no mention of the linguistic atrocities of the two French documents (nos. 25 and 112), the first of which is unintelligible in its printed form: we can but guess, for example, that *nainez* may be 'nauez'; *issir*, 'issir'; *que lau face mil custrages*, 'que l'an

face nul ultrage.' The Aragonese texts make a much more favorable impression, though we wonder somewhat at *que* (p. 72, l. 11), *veiendo* (114, 21), or (115, 5 and 7), *todrian* (115, 4), *io* (115, 5), *sayeyllada*, *sayeylla* (115, 11), *Mont pant* (127, 11). The work is accompanied by historical and geographical commentaries, and an index of proper names.

German lexicography has always played the step-mother towards *Fremdwörter*. The current *Fremdwörterbücher*, such as that of Heyse, attempt little more than to give a German definition of more or less technical foreign terms. *Fremdwörter* as such were entirely excluded from Grimm's *Deutsches Wörterbuch*, and of more recent dictionaries on a professedly historical basis only the new Weigand has admitted any considerable number of them. The tracing of the history of a *Fremdwort* has hence almost invariably been attended with difficulties far greater than those encountered in the case of words of native stock. There is, accordingly, ample reason for welcoming the first volume (A–K) of a new *Deutsches Fremdwörterbuch* by Hans Schulz (Strassburg, Trübner, 1913; 8vo., xxiii + 416 pp., b'd. M. 9.—) which is calculated to fill this gap. Schulz, who is a pupil of Kluge, treats only those foreign words that are generally current in the German of to-day. Strictly technical expressions and words now obsolete are disregarded. The first of these limitations will meet with general approval, and from the second there was also no escape in a work of the present compass. Within these limits the material has been collected and treated with extreme care. How large a field has been covered is indicated by the more than five hundred titles listed under the head of *Quellen*, all of these texts having been excerpted for the purposes of the dictionary. If any general criticism be in place, it is perhaps that no account should have been taken of pronunciation (including accent), or grammatical form. Thus one is frequently left in doubt as to the form, or indeed the existence, of a plural. The illustrative quotations are ample in number, and are presented in a most convenient way, each being accompanied by the date and the exact reference. The make-up of the book is exceptionally good.

<sup>10</sup> *Calendar of Wills*, etc. Part II, pp. 147–8.

<sup>11</sup> He had had another son (*Ibid.*, p. 35) who probably had died.

<sup>1</sup> Junta para Ampliación de Estudios é Investigaciones Científicas. Sección de Estudios Históricos.